

Testimony on SB604: Maryland Medical Assistance Program-Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides—Reimbursement and Wages

Position Favorable

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is David Mott and I live in Montgomery County, MD. I am a volunteer for the Maryland Poor People's Campaign and we are in total support of SB0604 and its reimbursement and wage goals for Personal Care Aides.

We strenuously request that this bill be passed in the 2023 Legislative session. To not adopt this legislation will be to prolong the shameful state of poverty that exists in Maryland working families and deepen the hurt visited on our Personal Care Aides, whose work is critical to a healthy Maryland.

During the height of the Covid Epidemic, Personal Care Aides and other health care providers were deemed critical workers. And, indeed they are, then and now. Yet the meager wages allowed by Maryland's timid approach to a living and family sustainable wage leaves Personal Care Aides' budgets and families in critical condition.

During research for the MD PPC "Resolution to End Poverty in Maryland," we found that working Marylanders face a high risk of economic ruin. In 2021, 10.3 % of Marylanders lived below the poverty line, which is a mere \$27,750 for a family of four. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Model, a family with two working adults and two children in Maryland needs an annual income of \$109,820 to have a comfortable living and basic economic security.

The Maryland minimum wage of \$13.25 per hour amounts to an annual wage based on a 40-hour work week of just \$27,560 -- \$190 less than the official poverty rate. And, many workers, including Personal Care Aides, are not scheduled to work a consistent 40 hours per week compounding the effect of a still low and inadequate wage. Raising the minimum wage to \$15.00 is still not a living wage.

SB0604 increases the hourly wage for Personal Care Aides – workers deemed critical to the health of individuals and communities –to \$25 per hour that is fairly shared by the provider agencies and the Maryland Medical Assistance Fund.

Personal Care Aides recognize a fundamental truth of the health care profession: they cannot adequately care for their patients and clients unless they can first care of themselves.

SB0604 is a start in helping Personal Care Aides take care of themselves and their families, which means improved health care for the Marylanders they are responsible for and who need their talent and skills.

With respect, pass SB0604 now.

David Mott

202-258-6583

14216 Chadwick Lane,

Rockville, MD 20853

dmottunion@gmail.com

Volunteer, The Maryland Poor People's Campaign

